News From the Wyoming Department of Health

Monday, April 3, 2006

Healthy Communities Focus of Public Health Week

The relationship between community environments and children's health is a focus for the Wyoming Public Health Association as the group celebrates Public Health Week this week.

Governor Dave Freudenthal recently declared April 3-9, 2006 as "Public Health Week" in Wyoming in coordination with this year's national theme of "Designing Healthy Communities: Raising Healthy Kids."

According to the association, the built environment of a community can create many health challenges such as access to medical and preventive health services, quality of and access to schools and housing, economic opportunities, social capital, air and water quality and opportunities for physical activity.

"The way we have designed current communities and neighborhoods has, among many things, greatly reduced walking and bicycling as standard means of transportation, and has contributed to increased rates of obesity in children" said Kurt Galbraith, Wyoming Public Health Association president. "People can influence the way communities are planned by demanding that policymakers and city planners consider ways to make the community healthier and discuss health issues facing children related to community design."

Wyoming Department of Health Director Dr. Brent Sherard said, "The good news is because we built these environments, we are equally empowered to create healthier ones. Providing our children with more sidewalks, parks, and bike paths, as well as safe places to play will create safer and healthier environments."

The Wyoming Public Health Association is encouraging individuals to take action to improve community health. Ways to get involved include:

- Send a letter to/plan a meeting with a local official to discuss city planning issues that may affect community health.
- Send a letter to the editor in your local newspaper about a public health issue that is important to you.
- Volunteer for a community-based, public health activity.

For more ideas, visit the National Public Health Week website at www.nphw.org. For more information about the Wyoming Public Health Association, call Marty Thone at (307) 577-9737.

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